

From: Joel Merry [jmerry@sagsheriff.com]
Sent: Friday, January 07, 2011 1:14 PM
To: Cifrino, Carole A
Subject: Implementing Product Stewardship in Maine - Report
Ms. Cifrino,

I am writing to weigh in on the public comment on the above named report to the Joint Standing Committee on Natural Resources. Specifically, I wish to speak to the sections of the report concerning Unused Pharmaceuticals and Medical Sharps.

I fully support the findings of the Maine Department of Environmental Protection concerning the need for product stewardship laws concerning the collection and safe disposal of both unused pharmaceuticals and medical sharps. Each of these areas pose significant public safety concerns for the citizens of the State of Maine.

I can only speak from my experience in Sagadahoc County and the southern mid coast area of the state, as I have been involved in a safe medicine collection and disposal program since 2005. The collection program has been effective in two specific areas – we have removed nearly 120,000 doses of controlled substances – in addition to more than 4 tons of non-controlled substances – and have given great peace of mind to many seniors and families living in the Midcoast area. This has all been done at the expense of limited grants and local taxpayer funding.

The Report lays out a compelling argument on the public safety concerns, and if you look at the data retrieved from the Northern New England Poison Center you will see a disturbing trend in the medication verification calls. Clearly, if there were a safe and viable means of disposing of unwanted and unused medications in this state, we could eliminate a huge public safety concern.

Although there is a tremendous alarm about prescription drug diversion, my concern as a chief law enforcement officer is about overall public safety of our citizens, and this includes overdoses as well as accidental poisonings. Safe disposal would be a critical step in alleviating such tragedies. I would like the Committee to keep this in mind.

Passing legislation that provides for the safe disposal of unused pharmaceuticals and medical sharps will make our State a safe and better place to live, work and enjoy life.

Respectfully submitted,
Joel Merry, Sheriff

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